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## **State's Behavioral Health Conference to Cover Critical Issues May 19-21 in Lincoln**

**Lincoln**—The state's annual behavioral health conference will be held May 19-21 in Lincoln. It is expected to attract consumers, family members, veterans, service providers and others interested in mental health and substance abuse issues from across the state.

"The conference is an opportunity for consumers to talk to others who are living in recovery and for others to gain critical insight on current issues," said Scot L. Adams, director of the Division of Behavioral Health at the Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services. "The speakers will cover significant topics, including peer support, PTSD, the criminal justice system, trauma and psychotropic medications."

The Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services co-sponsors this conference with the Mental Health Association of Nebraska. For additional information or to register go to <http://www.nebraskastateconference.org/> or contact the Mental Health Association at (402) 441-4373 or [ptalbott@mha-ne.org](mailto:ptalbott@mha-ne.org).

Three keynote speakers will be:

**Dan Abreu**, associate director, National GAINS Center at the federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. He provides technical assistance to communities and states on collaboration between mental health and criminal justice issues. He works with the 13 states that receive grants from SAMHSA for Jail Diversion Trauma Recovery Priority to Veterans. As many as 17 percent of veterans who have returned from duty overseas may have post-traumatic stress disorders and other mental illnesses. Many of these veterans' mental health issues may go untreated, placing them at higher risk for involvement in the justice system.

**Ann Jennings**, PhD., a consultant on trauma issues, has been involved for over 20 years in raising public awareness about the treatment of people with trauma resulting from sexual and physical abuse. She will talk about her daughter, Anna, a young woman who was sexually abused in early childhood and who spent 17 years in the mental health system diagnosed as schizophrenic. She died from suicide at the age of 32. Dr. Jennings is the founder and president of The Anna Institute, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to speaking truth about the

effects of childhood trauma, promoting prevention and early intervention, and providing resources for professional, community, and survivor use.

**Robert Whitaker**, a journalist and author, will talk about his most recent book, *Anatomy of an Epidemic: Magic Bullets, Psychiatric Drugs, and the Astonishing Rise of Mental Illness in America*, on research that he says proves that medications are overused in the treatment of mental illness. He has won the George Polk Award for medical writing and a National Association of Science Writers Award for best magazine article. A series he co-wrote for the Boston Globe on the abuse of mental patients in research settings was named a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize in 1998.

There will be a panel on the 10th anniversary of behavioral health reform in Nebraska. Panel members will talk about LB1083 (2004), which moved patients from institutionalized settings to community-based services.

Continuing education credits are available for substance abuse, mental health, problem gambling and peer support.